

Access board urged to deny lift

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Duxbury

DUXBURY — The commission on disability last night voted to recommend that the state Architectural Access Board deny the Duxbury Rural and Historical Society a variance to install a lift at the back of the building that will be the society's new headquarters.

The commission's recommendation came in an emergency meeting held to respond to the historical society's application to install a vertical lift at the back porch of the three-story Nathaniel Winsor House instead of building a ramp.

The commission had until Jan. 4, two weeks after the society's application, to make its recommendation.

Commission members said they did not endorse the plan because they had not seen the lift design and lacked other information that would enable them to decide whether a lift is the best alternative.

The Americans with Disabilities Act requires that public buildings be accessible to the disabled. State regulations allow for a lift if a ramp is not feasible or cost-effective, commission member Joseph Shea said.

"(A ramp) would not appear to fit either of those requirements (for a variance)," Shea said.

Historical society President Judith Hall said in a letter that a ramp, which would be about 94 feet long, is not feasible because it would have "substantial impact on the historic integrity of the

house's facade" and the state Historical Commission "prefers a less obtrusive solution."

The variance application states that the house will be used as a "museum house" and will include an office and caretaker's apartment. Members of the commission on disability said they wanted to know whether the upper floors would also be public space and whether there were plans to make them accessible to the disabled.

Commission Chairman Patricia Cristoforo said the access board had asked for the commission's opinion. She called the emergency meeting because the commission normally meets the first Wednesday of the month, too late to meet the Jan. 4 deadline for making its recommendation.

Historical society executive board member Marcia Solberg said she planned to send a letter to the access board asking that the decision on the application be postponed because the executive board had not reviewed or approved the plans for making the building accessible to the disabled.

Solberg suggested that the state board's decision be made after the annual meeting of the society Jan. 21, when it will have an opportunity to discuss the plans.